

Murphy: Mundurucu Religion

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multitude of other beasts of every species who were also pursuing the woman and her daughter, intent upon eating them. 599x

After the frog had shot and killed all the animals, he ordered the woman to skin them and to put their meat on the baliant and their hides in the fire. She did this, and there were so many that she was completely blackened with soot when she finished. Then the frog told her, "Go take a bath, but look only upstream and do not look behind you." He did not explain this order to her. The woman went to the stream and bathed, and the dirt from her body turned the stream black. This dirt was sitting upon the fish like timber, and they began to come to the surface, beating their tails three times before dying. The woman heard this sound and turned around to see what it was. All the fish immediately came back to life again and swam away. At this point the frog came down to the stream to collect the dead fish. When he saw that there were none, he asked the woman if she had looked around. She admitted that she had, and the frog told her that if she had not done this people would not have to go into the forest in search of wild timber. Instead, fish would have been killed by the dirt from the bodies of bathing women.

35. THE MAN WHO LIVED ON SMOKE

There was once a man whose only food was tobacco smoke. Without tobacco smoke he would die. He was so dependent upon tobacco that, when he ran out of it, he filled a gourd with smoke and drank from it.

One day he went to the forest to get Brazil nuts and brought along some tobacco and a gourd full of smoke. He smoked all the tobacco during the journey and began to drink the smoke from the gourd. He drank sparingly, but still he consumed all the smoke when only halfway up the tree. Since he could not live without it, he fell down to the ground dead. However, his body disappeared.

To this day people must plant tobacco only among the burned pieces of wood that lie about in the garden.

TALES OF ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

This last group of legends includes a somewhat varied assortment of stories that concern animals or people or, commonly, the two in interaction. The first story explains that dogs originated from a union between a girl and a dog in human form. Two other stories also deal with the domesticated dog. In tale 87 two dogs burst out of the eyes of a burning demon, and tale 50 tells how the inhabitants of the Land of Dogs took revenge upon a Mundurucu by feeding him bones. 598

Tales 37 to 40 are united by the common theme of hostility between father-in-law and son-in-law, an antagonism that seldom erupts into open quarrels in Mundurucu society. The story entitled "The Origin of the Alligator" tells of a man who eats his son-in-law, but who is finally outwitted by a son-in-law who escapes a series of traps. The structure of the tale bears a strong resemblance to a Tenetehara legend about a vulture father-in-law and to two Tukuna myths. 171 606

* Wagley and Gadde, 1948, pp. 110-111.

- 538 collected by Nimuendajá.² "The Man Who Married the Quarrel Monkey" is in many respects almost identical with a folktale of the same name reported by Roth from the Aruak of British Guiana.³ An interesting twist in the Mundurucú version is an incestuous union between the monkey-woman and her son. Tale 29 deals with the man's father-in-law's attempts to imitate the feats of his son-in-law and his consequent death. The story is clearly linked to the Tenetehara "Opawun Takes a Son-in-law."⁴ Another variation of the theme of union between two species is found in tale 40, in which the deer unknowingly marries a jaguar-girl. A similar story is reported from the Tukuna,⁵ both Mundurucú versions include an episode in which the son-in-law must maintain a normal dominance in the face of the wife's family.

- 539 Included in the following collection are four stories about the land tortoise, a notorious prankster in the folklore of the Amazon. Tales about the land tortoise are well represented in collections of Brazilian oral literature, and Charles F. Hartt devoted an entire volume to these stories.⁶

Three stories concern humans who made love to animals. Although this is a common theme in the region, it is worth while to note that the Mundurucú story of a man's love for a cloth has parallels in *Chiriguano* and *Guianan Aruak* lore.⁷ Also, stories of a liaison between a woman and a snake are found among both the Mundurucú (tale 49) and the Tenetehara.⁸

The last two stories in this section are of great interest. Tale 57 is an obvious rendition of the story of Hansel and Gretel, although the actors are spiders, and the wicked witch appears as a Yurupari. It should be noted that the cruel stepmother is missing in the Mundurucú version, as she is in the legend "Baba in the Wood," collected by Wagley and Galvão among the Tenetehara.⁹ Finally, it is fitting that the last Mundurucú myth (58) to be related should be the one that explains their acceptance of the whites. Although the idea that the Mundurucú once owned the present site of the city of Belém has no basis in truth, it is quite accurate to attribute their involvement with the whites to their desire for manufactured articles. This realism is consistent with the common recognition of the modern Mundurucú that needs are cumulative.

26. ORIGIN OF THE DOG

- x539 Dachekeú had arrived at her first menses. She therefore stayed in the house alone when her mother went to the garden and her two brothers set out for the hunt. After they had all left, a young man entered the house. His name was Karupitabé, and he was not a human at all but a dog in human form. However, at that time there were no dogs in the village of people as there are today.

² Nimuendajá, 1922, pp. 143-144.

³ Roth, 1915, p. 71.

⁴ Wagley and Galvão, 1948, pp. 111-114.

⁵ Nimuendajá, 1922, p. 130.

⁶ Hartt, 1977.

⁷ Nordenskiöld, 1904, p. 290.

⁸ Roth, 1915, p. 204. This story is slightly variant in that a woman loves a male cloth.

⁹ Wagley and Galvão, 1948, p. 140.

¹⁰ Wagley and Galvão, 1948, pp. 183-185.

THE LOCAL GROUP

476 the women of her household. Occasionally, two or more
 591 men of the same household will plan a garden jointly, al-
 621 though this is not normal procedure. In hunting, the man
 may join in a communal chase with all other men or with
 only a few of his choice, who may be from any household.
 [606] In short, the bridegroom is expected to show respect, def-
 erence, and a degree of obedience to his father-in-law, but
 there are few occasions on which the men of the house
 act as a unit under central direction. This extends even
 to the construction of the house, for each dwelling of a
 new village is erected by the collective labor of all resi-
 dents.

591 The men are by no means completely disassociated from
 593 the dwellings of their wives. The husbands frequently re-
 621 lax there, visit their children, or take a snack of food. And,
 as has been noted, the passage of years usually sees a con-
 solidation of ties between man and wife and, concomi-
 tantly, with her household; it also sees the growth of the
 husband's prestige within the extended family unit. But
 most of the male's time is passed in the men's house, and
 the locus of his political and economic activity remains in
 its framework and not in that of the household. The rela-
 tionship between men's house and dwelling will become
 clearer when the organization of the latter is discussed.

345 In the eksá lineal affiliations are recognized in the sleep-
 513 ing arrangements. On each side of the men's house and
 61 down its middle are horizontal poles, running the full
 length of the house five feet above the ground. These sup-
 ports form the stays from which two rows of hammocks
 are hung. The men of the Red moiety always sleep in the
 south row, those of the White in the north. Individual
 clans have no fixed place in each row, for clan composition
 in each village is too variable. The oldest men always hang
 their hammocks in the rear of the shelter, where they gain